



StanChart regional boss due today

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Anurag Adlakha, regional chief financial officer of Standard Chartered Bank for India and South Asia, is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka today, says a press release.

On a two-day official visit to Bangladesh, he will review the bank's business with Bangladesh Management.

Khulna TCB to sell 4,000 tonnes edible oil in Ramadan

BSS, Khulna

Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) will sell four thousand tonnes of edible oil and 45 tonnes of sugar in Ramadan in Khulna.

TCB sources said the items have already reached the TCB silos here in the middle of the June.

Apart from this, the TCB will also sell pulses and onions at different points in the city, including nine upazilas in Khulna district, like the previous year.

The TCB sold three thousand kgs of pulses and onions, 15 thousand kgs of sugar and two thousand litres edible oil in the last Ramadan.

Indian private airlines go on strike Aug 18

BSS, New Delhi

The major private airlines in India will remain grounded on August 18 with a view to seeking government's bail-out package in the form of lowering fuel prices and airport taxes.

Weighed down by losses of Rs 10,000 crore last year and with no silver lining on the horizon, all but one of India's seven private airlines have decided to go on strike.

This is for the first time that almost the entire sector is taking such concerted action on an issue affecting their survival. National carrier Air India and the business class-only Paramount Airways are the only ones staying away from the strike, newspaper reports said.

The airlines will refund money to all those who have bought tickets for August 18.

Reacting to this threat, Civil Aviation Minister Praful Patel said: "The government does not support any move that will make inconvenience to the people. We advise airlines to engage in a dialogue with the government."

Sun Pharma introduces new drug for insomnia

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Sun Pharmaceutical Bangladesh Ltd has recently introduced 'Nitrest', a 10mg Zolpidem tablet as a cure to insomnia and sleep deprivation for other diseases, said a press release.

The sleeping pill, pronounced as 'night-rest', has been proven through various clinical trials from around the world that patients fall asleep within 15-20 minutes of administration and enjoy "restful sleep" for an uninterrupted six to eight hours, Sun said in the statement.

The medicine is available at affordable prices under the prescription of a registered physician, added the statement.

Unreliable data barrier to growth

Analysts say at workshop

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Weak and inconsistent statistical databases remain an impediment to making plans on economic and development issues, economists and business leaders said yesterday.

"The statistical base of our country is weak. We still don't have accurate data on population and poverty. It is difficult to make appropriate plans unless we get rid of the problem," said Quazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, president of Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA), at a seminar.

Citing data on unemployment by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Ahmad said it has no operational meaning, as it fails to give proper guidance on the employment scenario in the country.

The Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF) organised the seminar on the state of economy at the National Press Club.

Prime Minister's Economic Affairs Adviser Dr Mashur Rahman, Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Waliur Rahman Bhuiyan, National Credit and Commerce

Bank Managing Director Nurul Amin and Multimode Group Chairman Abdul Awal Mintoo also spoke.

Ananya Raihan, executive director of D.Net, presented a paper at the programme, observing that the Bangladesh economy performed relatively well in the days of global financial crisis, as GDP grew by 5.9 percent in fiscal 2008-09 with easing inflation.

Speakers at the discussion suggested stimulating domestic economy to remain free from the fallout of global recession. They favoured increased investment in both the industrial and agriculture sector to help the economy grow faster.

But a shortage of power and energy hurts the objective of attaining increased domestic and foreign investment, they said.

"Investment will not rise in the absence of power supply," said Dr Mashur Rahman, the prime minister's economic adviser.

He said the government should take courageous steps towards coal extraction to generate power.

The chairman of Multimode Group said focus

on accelerating domestic investment is required to create more employment and spur domestic economy.

Mintoo however lamented the lack of data on domestic investment. "We get data according to investment registration, not the actual data on domestic investment. Foreign investment statistics, prepared by government agencies, are inconsistent."

"The same is true for the data available on employment. There is still no proper data on how many people enter the job market a year and the percentage of population that is unemployed in real terms," he said, demanding autonomy for BBS to prepare valid data without government interference.

At the programme, four journalists from print and electronic media were awarded for reporting on economic issues.

The winners are: Fakhruddin Islam Harun of Bangla-language daily Prothom Alo, Salahuddin Bablu of the Inqilab, and Sharmin Rinni of private television channel Bangla Vision and Miraz Ahmed Chowdhury of NTV.



Hasanul A Hasan, founder and vice-president (treasury, human resource and administration) of American International University-Bangladesh, and Lokesh Mehra, regional manager for corporate responsibility of Cisco India & Saarc, pose at the second National Cisco Skills Competition in Dhaka yesterday.

Govt to extend credit to fishermen

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government would soon provide loan facilities for poor fishermen to develop the sector, said the finance ministry yesterday.

"Fishermen, who are being deprived of an access to loans, will be benefited by this facility within two to three years," AMA Muhith told a fisheries fair in Dhaka.

The Directorate of Fisheries and the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock jointly organised the five-

day Fisheries Fair 2009 on the Bangladesh Shishu Academy premises.

The minister hoped that more than 15 to 20 lakh people in this sector will be employed within the next five years, if modern technologies could be used to rear fish in the floodplains.

Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdul Latif Biswas, Secretary Md Shah Alam and Director General of Fisheries Md Rafiqul Islam also spoke.

Muhith said the present

government has undertaken a policy to save the water bodies and wetlands from land grabbers.

Biswas said about 1.25 crore people are dependent on fishing.

"Fish is cultivated on 49.51 hectares of land in the country, of which 27 hectares are floodplains. Fisheries account for about 4 percent of the total export earning and 21 percent of GDP. The government is trying to increase the production of fish," he said.

Faulty policies blamed for lagging western region

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A lack of specialised economic policy and financial management system, energy and power crisis, and problems in investment and marketing procedures are hindering the development of the country's western region, said speakers at a seminar in Rajshahi yesterday.

They also said long-term government plans, effective policies made by experts and responsible role of entrepreneurs can still build a sustainable economic base in the

region that can be a powerhouse of the national economy.

They were speaking at a regional seminar on 'Problems of economic development in western region and prospects' at Rajshahi University, jointly organised by the economics department of the university and Bangladesh Economics Samity (BES).

"The region's economy is dependent on agriculture and some small and medium enterprises, but most of its industries were shut down in the last several decades for

faulty policies," said Vice Chancellor of the university Prof M Abdus Sobhan who attended the seminar as the chief guest.

"Appropriate plans and sincere attitude towards equal development of all regions in the country can solve the economic problems," he said.

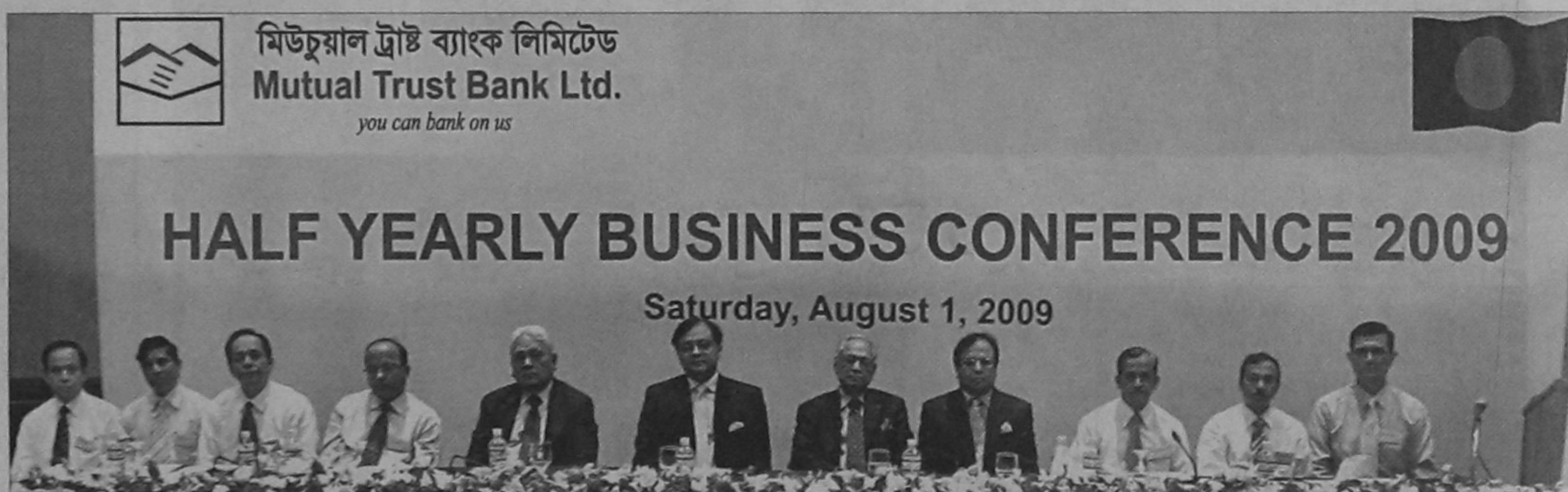
Prof M Mohsin Ali, chairman of economics department, chaired the inaugural session of the seminar.

Pro-VC Prof Muhammad Nurullah, Treasurer Prof M Abdur Rahman and BES Vice President Prof

Ashraf Uddin Chowdhury, among others, spoke.

Prof Dr M Abdus Wadud, Shamima Sultana, Prof Dr Mohamamd Ali, Prof Tariq Saiful Islam, Dr M Moazzem Hossain Khan, Dr ANK Noman, Nibedita Mollik, Dr M Illias Hossain and Jesmin Ara presented their thesis on different economic aspects in the region.

Educationalists from different universities, economists, planners, researchers and students also participated in the seminar.



Samson H Chowdhury, chairman of Mutual Trust Bank Ltd, is seen at the bank's Half-Yearly Business Conference 2009 at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka yesterday. The bank posted more than 15 percent increase in the footing of its half-yearly balance sheet as on June 30, 2009, compared to the same period a year ago. It disclosed a 30 percent rise in operating profit.

BRAC Bank buys stake in Equity Partners



The picture shows a signing ceremony on the acquisition of 51 percent stakes in Equity Partners Ltd and Equity Partners Securities Ltd by BRAC Bank Ltd, in Dhaka recently.

STAR BUSINESS DESK

BRAC Bank Ltd has acquired 51 percent stakes in Equity Partners Ltd (EPL) and Equity Partners Securities Ltd (EPSL), says a press release.

The deal was completed at a formal ceremony held at a local hotel in Dhaka recently.

EPL, a leading merchant bank, was formed in 2000. EPSL is a leading brokerage house, is an affiliate of EPL and has operations in both the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) and Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE).

On the occasion, AEA Muhaimen, managing director and chief executive officer of BRAC Bank, said, "As a full-scale bank cutting through all areas of financial services, BRAC had plans to enter the capital market. By acquiring controlling stakes in reputed, experienced and enduring companies like EPL and EPSL, we will now fulfil our commitment by entering the capital market in full bloom."

Andrew Mc Donnell Fraser, chairman of EPL, Mark Reinecke, managing director of EPL, and Saiful Islam, managing director of EPSL, were also present.

BKMEA eyes No. 1 position in knit exports

BSS, Dhaka

Compliance is a must for attracting more foreign buyers in the country's knitwear sector against the backdrop of global economic meltdown.

Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) President Fazlul Haque yesterday said this at a view exchange meeting on 'Compliant knitwear sector: practical situation, challenges and develop-

ment strategy'.

He said the knitwear buyers are now looking for cheaper markets, but while giving orders, they want to know about compliance at the factory level in Bangladesh.

Knitwear factory owners of Dhaka, Savar, Gazipur and Narayanganj attended the meeting under Social Compliance Monitoring Programme (SCMP) at a city hotel, a press release said.

Problems related with compliance in knitwear

factories in this region were discussed in the meeting and cooperation from the owners was sought to solve those.

Fazlul Haque said Bangladesh's target is to achieve the first position in knitwear export in the global market pushing behind China and Turkey. The country is now in the third position.

BKMEA Vice Presidents Abdur Rashed, MA Baset and Zahidul Haque Bhuiyan, among others, were present.



AKM Bahauddin Bahar MP inaugurates the 33rd branch of Social Islami Bank Ltd at Chawkbazar in Comilla on Thursday.

News in Brief



Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange in afternoon trading on Friday. Extending the Dow Jones Industrial Average's best monthly gain since 2002, US stocks rose on Friday. The release of a better-than-expected gross domestic product helped drive speculation that the economy is recovering from the recession.

IMF reaches agreement on loan payout to Iceland

AFP, Washington

The International Monetary Fund on Friday said it reached an agreement with Iceland to unblock the second instalment of a loan to the recession-stricken country.

"The government of Iceland and IMF staff have reached an agreement on policies to underpin the first review under the Stand-By Arrangement," Poul Thomsen, deputy director in the IMF European department, said in a statement.

The multilateral institution said the agreement was being reviewed by IMF management and would then need to be presented to the IMF's executive board for their consideration and approval.

An IMF executive board meeting could be held in late August or early September.

The IMF fast-tracked a 2.1-billion-dollar loan to Iceland in November, a month after the collapse of the country's booming financial sector.

That catastrophic failure pushed the country to the brink of bankruptcy and forced the government to take control of the biggest banks as the currency nosedived.

Iceland was the first Western European country to be rescued by the IMF since Britain in 1976.

The Washington-based institution, which immediately paid out around 827 million dollars to Reykjavik, delayed the first of eight planned installments of 155 million dollars, initially scheduled in February.

The second instalment is worth some 163 million dollars.

Indian markets to track global markets

AFP, Mumbai

India's stock market will this week track global markets, which have risen on positive quarterly earnings, dealers said.

With the local earnings season over, the performance of emerging markets like India will be tied to overseas fund flows and global market trends, dealers said.

"The buying momentum is improving. We could see further gains on overseas fund buying," said Bhaskar Kapadia, partner at brokerage Pyramid Securities.

Investors will eye the performance of Indian firms which are set to raise funds from the capital markets with initial public offerings (IPOs) in coming months.

They will also be watching the progress of the monsoon which is vital for an agricultural economy like India that lacks adequate irrigation facilities.

Earlier this week, India's central bank Reserve Bank of India kept interest rates unchanged in an effort to bring the country back to a high-growth path of nine percent.

India grew by 6.7 percent for the year to March -- the slowest rate since 2003 and down from nine percent a year earlier -- as the global economic downturn took effect.

For the week to July 31, the benchmark 30-share Sensex index rose 1.89 percent or 291.35 points to 15,378.96.

US trade envoy to voice 'tough love' for Africa

AFP, Washington

The top US trade diplomat said Friday he would have a message of "tough love" for African nations on an upcoming visit after some complained about extending export preferences to other poor regions.

US Trade Representative Ron Kirk plans to travel with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to an economic meeting this week in Kenya. Kirk will then visit Ethiopia and Senegal, while Clinton will head to six other African nations.

The Kenya meeting involves countries covered by the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a US law giving preferential access to the world's biggest market to African states with open markets and democratic governments.

Kirk acknowledged that some African nations were concerned at calls by US lawmakers to extend such benefits to impoverished nations in other regions -- notably Bangladesh and Cambodia, major producers of textiles.

"I think some of what we may respond with is a little bit of tough love," Kirk told reporters on a conference call.

Fitch warns Britain on cutting debt

AFP, London

International credit ratings agency Fitch said on Friday it would keep Britain's rating at the top level of AAA but warned about the challenge of reducing rising public debt.

"The UK's 'AAA' ratings remain supported by its high-value added and diversified economy, robust institutions and the sovereign's very strong financing flexibility," Fitch said in a statement.

"Fitch warns that the UK faces one of the most serious post-crisis fiscal adjustment challenges among 'AAA' governments."

The agency said that debt was rising "extremely rapidly" but was still not expected to be any higher than in other major economies.

Britain's debt is expected to rise to 80 percent of gross domestic product by the end of 2010 from just 44 percent in 2007, Fitch said.